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OF THE

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REV. CHAS. E. CHENEY.

Subject: "Eli Trembling for the Ark."

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THE CHICAGO PULPIT,

An Unsectarian Publication

OF

Sterling Sermons.

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ELI TREMBLING FOR THE ARK.*

Regards of CHARLES EDWARD CHENEY.

Lo! Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching; for his heart trembled for the Ark of God. *1 Samuel iv: 13.*

It is a curious fact that in the faces of the dead we can often trace resemblances which we never observed in life. As though the cold hand of death had softly withdrawn some unseen veil — new traits appear in a face with which we felt that we were perfectly familiar, and subtle likenesses to living kindred are revealed, which before had eluded our most careful study.

Something not altogether unlike this well-known fact, may be found in customs that have died, and institutions which have forever passed away. Take, for example, the Mosaic rites and ceremonies. How few of the people to whom they were given, ever saw in them the idea of such a Saviour as, in the fullness of time, God sent forth. But to-day the Old Testament ritual is dead. We penetrate its sepulchre. We bend over its sarcophagus; and in its every feature we behold a subtle likeness — an unmistakable foreshadowing of Jesus the Redeemer.

The text suggests one object in the vast number of ceremonial appliances connected first with the tabernacle of the congregation, and then with the worship of the temple at Jerusalem. And what was this "Ark of the Covenant," for which the heart of the aged Eli was trembling as he sat by the gate of Shiloh? Nothing but a wooden box — a chest whose lid was surmounted by a golden rim, and on which stood the figures of cherubim with wings outspread above the Mercy-seat. Surely, the Ark of the Lord can have nothing of value or interest to us. Whatever it may have been to the Hebrew, it sleeps to-day among the dead ordinances of a departed dis-

*A discourse delivered Sunday, January. 12, 1873, in Christ Church, by the Rector, Rev. Charles Edward Cheney.

pensation. But let us, for a moment, look a little closer at the face of the dead. Has it no feature which tells of its kindred to the Saviour that you love? By Divine command, the Ark of the Covenant stood both in the tabernacle and in the temple — in the Holy of Holies — the spot so sacred that only one human being could enter it and live. But before it hung that mystic veil, that no hand save that of the High Priest might dare to lift. The ordinary worshipper could tread the outer courts, the priest could burn incense on the altar which stood before that separating curtain; the Levite could perform his humbler ministrations at a distance from the hallowed veil, but, on the Mercy-seat — the Ark of the Covenant of God — none but the High Priest could ever look.

So from the Hebrew was Christ concealed behind the veil of symbol and ceremonial observance. It was only when upon the Cross He cried, "*It is finished.*" that "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," and the way into the Holiest opened by the blood of Jesus. The Ark was moreover the *only* object in the most holy place. It stood alone. Nothing shared with it the solemn glory of that inmost sanctuary. When, once a year, the High Priest passed the veil, the only light which filled the sacred place was the splendor that beamed from the Ark itself or from the mystic cloud upon it. Even so is Jesus the sole object of adoration in the inner sanctuary of the believer's heart. From Him comes all the light that fills the Christian's soul. In heaven's temple every eye shall be fixed on Him, "and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Above all other features in which the Ark foreshadowed the Messiah, is the fact that *by it God revealed himself to His people.* Over it, between the cherubim, hung the cloud out of which Jehovah spoke. This was the Shekinah, the symbol of the Divine Presence, the oracle of heavenly counsel. Could anything more clearly prefigure Jesus, who spake as never man spake, who was the very mouth-piece of the Father, and through whom alone God has been pleased to make His character known to men? I find, then, in the Ark of the Covenant, a type of Christ in His modes of communication to His people. I think that we are warranted in looking upon all that Christ has employed to manifest himself to us, as symbolized in the Ark of the Lord.

As that was His ancient method of speaking to those He loved, so now does He speak to them by the Bible, the Church, the ministry, the preaching of the Gospel, the sacraments and ordinances of His kingdom. These occupy the place in the new dispensation which the Ark held in the old, and from that

which befel the ancient symbol, we may learn a momentous lesson in regard to its modern representative.

Notice Eli's anxiety in reference to the Ark.

Recent events have wakened new interest in one of the most ancient churches that our land possesses. Historic reminiscences of Boston's "Old South Church" have revived at the touch of fire, as heat sometimes brings out to view the writing before invisible. It is not hard to picture to ourselves what must have been their feelings who had worshipped in those courts, when the British soldiers bivouacked in its pews, and the trampling of chargers woke the echoes of the sanctuary. We love the very place where God met us as He met Jacob at Bethel. We come to *name* it "Bethel"—"the House of God." It weaves in Memory's web, ten thousand gossamer threads of precious associations. To have such a place the camping-ground of men of war, to have the rude song and idle jest echo through the arches that had resounded with praise or been thrilled with the accents of prayer, this were indeed a bitter cup to drink.

But, beloved, there is something with which such desecration cannot be compared. There is a pollution of the sanctuary more terrible than the tread of armies. It is when the House of God is made unclean by the sins of its ministers. Worse to the people of the Lord than "the pestilence that walketh in darkness" — worse than the desolations of the sword — worse than famine-stricken fields — worse than overwhelming disaster to commerce, when the teachers of religion are men whose hands are defiled, whose hearts are impure, and whose lives are unholy. To this, I say, no other calamity is comparable. It strikes at the root of all national morality. It brings religion into contempt. It sweeps men by wholesale into the vortex of infidelity.

Yet this was exactly the state of Israel at the period to which the text refers. Eli — the aged High Priest — was tottering on the verge of the grave. At best, a weak old man, the infirmities of accumulated years had withdrawn him almost wholly from the duties of his office. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, really held the High Priesthood and swayed the sceptre of judicial power over the Israelitish race. Striking illustration of the truth that grace does not run in the blood, no viler men ever disgraced the earth than these base scions of a noble stock. They ground the people under the iron heel of a godless tyranny. They prostituted the priesthood, and made the temple of God a cage of unclean birds. Prototypes of the Borgias, and that line of Popes whose crimes were the powder which a spark kindled into the Reformation, these sons of Eli made themselves so vile, "that neither men's property nor woman's virtue was safe beneath their sway." "Like priest —

like people." The corruption spread. The nation was infected. Like a fretting leprosy it crept over the whole body politic.

How could a people enervated thus by sin meet their foes in battle? When the sons of the High Priest went forth to lead them against the Philistines, how could they place confidence in chieftains whose only fame was infamy? Disaster and disgrace overwhelm their cause at the first onset of the enemy. Then, like a gambler, who, desperate at his losses, stakes all upon the turning of a card, they venture everything upon one hazardous and unprecedented experiment. The Ark of God is taken from its place. The veil is parted. The Mercy-seat is exposed to unhallowed eyes. They bear away the symbol of God's presence to the camp, as if God himself were compelled to go wherever they carried the visible token of His presence.

The Ark has gone. A night has passed. At the gate of Shiloh, Eli sits. Blind, infirm, heavy with extreme old age, he waits on that seat of carven stone, by the roadside, for tidings of the battle. Look at his quivering face! See how his palsied hand is shaking! Mark how his whole frame trembles with shivering apprehension! Do you know what awakens his supreme solicitude? The fate of the nation is hanging in the balances of battle. But not for that does he tremble. His two sons are in the hottest of the desperate fight. But his heart is throbbing with no anxiety for them. What says the text? "Lo! Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching; for he trembled for the Ark of God."

Hark! Those blind eyes may not see; but all the quicker are the ears to catch the step of yonder hasty messenger. Eagerly does the old priest inquire the tidings of the day. Oh! what an answer does he gain! "*The Philistines are victorious.*" Terrible news, but *that* he can bear. "*Israel has fled before the enemy, and thousands have perished by the sword.*" Disastrous tidings these; but still he can hope for better things. But ah! that cup of gall is not yet full; "*Thy two sons — Hophni and Phinehas, are slain.*" Surely that must have been a stunning blow to Eli! But he can live even through that. Listen once more! "*The Ark of God is taken.*" Oh! what words of horror are these! "And it came to pass," says the sacred historian, "It came to pass that when he made mention of the Ark of God, that Eli fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake and he died, for he was an old man and heavy."

Brethren, I know of no picture on history's page more striking than this. Above Eli's patriotism, above his pity for his people, above his love for his children, rose the pent-up torrent of his affection for the Ark of God! He could live through the loss of all things else. But to know that the Ark

was taken, struck his death-blow. Do you wonder? I do not. It was the Ark by which God manifested and revealed himself to Israel. It was their oracle of counsel and divine direction. To lose it was to lose the compass from the binnacle when the ship is on unknown seas. It was to dash the torch from the hand of the wanderer who staggers through the labyrinths of some many-chambered cave. It was to stifle the voice of the guide when precipices yawn beneath the traveler's feet. Was it strange that the High Priest's supreme anxiety was for the Ark?

But what is all this to you and me? What practical value has it for modern readers of the Bible? Do not let that question be lightly answered. Remember that whatever God uses now to reveal himself to us, should stand to the believer in the relation that the Ark stood to the Hebrew in the days of Eli. The Ark of the Covenant is that by which God has spoken to you and me. Christian, do you remember a day when your soul, weary of the world, found no peace? Like Noah's dove, you hovered over the dark flood of conscious sin and not one spot appeared on which your heart could rest. You wanted peace. You looked to yourself and all was dark. You tried to anchor on feelings and emotions, and you only drifted further out to sea. What finger but that of God turned just that leaf of your Bible and pointed to just that line in which it was written, "*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin?*" Ah, brother, God spake to you then from out of the cloud above the Ark of the Lord. From that hour the Bible was the Ark of the *Covenant* to you. Do you know that your Ark is out on the battle-field in the thickest of the strife? Do you know that the Philistines are all around it? Do you know that never was there more need, than now, for every man who loves the Bible, to stand, like a rock, firm in its defence? Tell me, do you feel Eli's eager interest in the victory of the Ark?

Or, again, if you are to-day a Christian, it is because you have given one day in seven to your Master. Have you found it any too much to keep you near to Jesus? Has it been more than was needed to help you along the way of holiness? But the Sabbath is in the midst of battle. Its foes swarm like Philistines around it. This very hour, and in this very city, it seems as though the enemy were likely to prevail against it. Is your heart trembling like Eli's, lest the Ark of God be taken?

There are men here who owe their hope of heaven to the work of the Christian ministry. It may be from lips now cold in death that the truth fell like dew upon your heart. But they were from the lips of a minister of Jesus. You cannot forget how lovingly he unfolded to you the simplicity of salvation

hrough the blood of Christ, how tenderly he strove to lead you to the cross. And through his ministry God spoke to you as He spoke from the cloud that hovered above the Ark. But how fashionable it is to-day to revile the ministry of Christ! We are told that its work in this world is done; its usefulness ended; its methods worn-out; its feebleness apparent; and its death as sure as the setting of the sun. How the wretched class of papers which, like carrion crows, fatten on corruption, love to parade the details of the fall of a minister of Christ! How they gloat over a departure from purity of one who ever claimed to be a teacher of the Gospel! How they lay these sins of individuals at the door of the class!

But brother, the ministry was to you an Ark from which God spoke to your soul. In the fierce battle which assails it, where are your sympathies?

Nay! you never witnessed a baptism that did not speak of the necessity for the regeneration which it symbolized. You never beheld a communion, where the voice of God was not heard telling of the love that gave the sufferings of Jesus for your soul. But who does not know that the battle is being waged against the two simple sacraments of Christ's grace and love, with war of argument and ridicule? Is thy heart trembling, like Eli's, with eager solicitude for the Ark of God? Does no voice from out the past speak of Meroz, that "came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty?"

There were good grounds for Eli's apprehension.

The summer's gentlest breath which stirs the foliage on no other tree, sets all the aspen's leaves to quivering. True symbol of a guilty conscience! "Thou hast bloody hands"—"Thou hast bloody hands"—was the taunting accusation which a murderer in one of our prisons fancied his fellow-convict shrieked through the massive wall of his cell.

As Eli sat upon his seat of stone beside the gate of Shiloh, his soul was stirred by another feeling than mere anxiety for the Ark of God. He trembled with the fear that a wounded conscience ever wakens in the breast. Well did he know that, without his sanction, the sacred Ark never could have been taken from the Tabernacle of the congregation. He knew that he and his people had ventured on an experiment as sinful as it was desperate. For Israel had perverted the Ark from the purpose for which God had given it. It was profaned, degraded from its proper place. What right had any human being to drag out the Ark of the Lord from behind the veil of the Holy of Holies? Jehovah had ordained that it should be kept "in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High." It was a fool-hardy defiance of the Lord that led men to profane it by

carrying it out where the roar of the battle resounded, and the dust of the conflict clouded the stifling air.

Do you remember the letter which your dead mother wrote you when she knew that she would not live to see your loved face again? Is it not wonderful in its depth of tenderness, its measureless riches of a mother's unpurchased affection for her child? But how you keep it in the inner shrine of your memory! What a vile thing it were to let those sweet words that bring the tears to your eyes to-day, be bandied about by lips that would pollute them!

There is a sweet face, done up in gold and velvet, which that young man carries nearest to his heart. What a power has been in that picture! It has stimulated him to effort. It has wakened every noble aspiration. It has been like a wall of rock to help him to meet the onsets of temptation. What think you of him to whom it has been entrusted, if he were to multiply copies of it, and hawk them through the streets for money? Yet just this was Israel's sin. They had taken the Ark by which God had talked with them, which He had made the symbol of His presence, and dragged it out where din of the battle had echoed among the hills of Judah. Has that profanation no parallel in modern times?

Why, brethren, never is the land shaken by a great political convulsion, but the effort is made by the one party or the other to draw the kingdom of Christ into the arena of the contest. Take such a battle as that whose roar has hardly died away since last November. It involved no great moral question. It did not touch that Kingdom which is not of this world. But on either side the aid of the pulpit was invoked. And in some cases the Ark of the Lord was carried into the field of political battle.

Take a somewhat different case. Suppose a man comes to you and says, "I want a position of political preferment; there are commercial and business interests which I am seeking to advance. I am aiming at professional distinction; and I belong to your church, I agree with you in my religious views. I claim your influence in my behalf."

What right has that man to make his religious belief and his ecclesiastical associations a mill with which to grind out his selfish purposes? What right has he to penetrate the most holy places and lay hands upon the Ark to bear it out into his battle with the world?

Again, the world is full of infidelity. Scientific men are arrayed against the truth of the Bible. The central truth of the Atonement is arraigned. The citadel of prayer is assaulted by storm. And men who half sympathize with skepticism, yet do not like to own it, cry out, "Why does not the pulpit cease

this old preaching of thread-bare doctrines about the sacrifice of Christ, and the necessity of regeneration, and the justification of the soul by faith, and take up the new issues of the day? Why not become the enlightener and instructor of the age? Why not teach from the pulpit the nebulous theory of creation, and the processes of material development, the laws of natural forces, and the wonders of heat and light and gravitation? These are the great truths of the present age. Why does not the Church adopt and promulgate them?" And the answer is simple and conclusive. Because the Gospel pulpit was not given to men for such a purpose. Like the Eddystone light-house it bears upon its front the motto, "To give light and to save life."

When the Harper's great publishing house was wrapped in flames, some one said to one of the partners, "What shall we save first?" "The lives, the lives," was the reply. Our first work in Gospel preaching is to save men's souls. To use the pulpit as a mere educational instrument, is to turn it from its purpose. God never ordained His everlasting Gospel to be carried into the dust and din of the ephemeral controversies of the day.

But, again, heaven is a family. Its social aspect is apparent in all that is foreshadowed in regard to it. It is at "the marriage supper of the Lamb," that the redeemed are to meet together. The idea would be preposterous of a family who did not know each other. But in a congregation of Christians on earth, how often does the complaint arise, "My fellow church members do not know me. I have been for months, even years, a worshipper beneath this roof and yet not one face meets me here with a smile of recognition."

Now I do not believe that such a state of things is right. But while I might say that those who make the complaint are themselves to blame, while I might urge that our social gatherings of various kinds, our sewing circles and ladies' societies, have just this end in view, and that they who fail to make acquaintance, are they who will not come half-way to meet the welcome thus extended, while I might, I say, justly plead such arguments, I go beyond all that. Is social enjoyment, is amusement of our weary hours, is acquaintance with each other, is a position in society, the *great purpose* for which the Church of God is given? Is it not dragging the Ark of the Covenant out to do battle for us in the struggle of social forces?

But Eli's fears for the Ark were doubtless well-grounded, not only because Israel had *profaned* it, but because they trusted in it rather than in the God who gave it.

To send the thirsty to a fountain through which the water long ago ceased to flow, to lead the cold to a hearth on which

the dead ashes lie, to call men to hear the twittering of the young swallows in the last year's nest, this it is to trust the mere instrument through which God has been pleased to speak.

Do you call it folly? It is more than that. It is an insult and dishonor to God. From this pulpit sounded out the truth by which yonder soul was brought to the knowledge of the Saviour. Would it honor the preacher; would it be reflecting credit on the truth which he proclaimed, to take this wooden desk, and bear it out through the thronged streets, crying, "Here is that which brought peace to my soul; look on it and live"?

Yet just that was what Israel did. God had spoken through the Ark. He had made it an instrument of manifestation of himself. And so, instead of putting their trust in Him to "cover their head in the day of battle," they took the wooden box on which the Shekinah had appeared, and bore it to the fight, as though God's presence, of necessity, went with it.

Beloved, what is this outward body which we call the Church of Christ? It is a visible society through which God teaches the grand truth that His children are one with Him in an inward and spiritual Church. He speaks through the Church as through the Ark in the ancient day. And yet men take that visible kingdom, and, as though the trumpet were a voice, call *it* the Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. They talk as though its canons and decisions were the very voice of God.

Christ ordained baptism to be a perpetual witness that spiritual regeneration is indispensable to an entrance into His kingdom. As through the Ark He spake to Israel — so in every baptismal washing does He speak to us of an inward washing of His grace. And men, like those in the days of Eli, fancy that God's spirit is inseparable from the Ark — and tell us that baptism *is* regeneration.

We gather — as last Sunday — around this chancel-rail to celebrate the Supper of the Lord. It was Christ's last bequest to His people — an Ark from whose Shekinah the voice of God teaches the love of Him who gave His body to be broken, His blood to be poured out for sinners. And men take the Ark and say, this is the "real presence" of our God. This wine *is* His blood. This bread *is* His body. Brethren, the most solemn lesson of this passage is a warning not to trust to the Ark of our religious privileges and advantages.

There is, I think, among the frescoes of the Vatican at Rome a famous picture of the Holy Family. The scene is in the stable at Bethlehem. No windows pierce the walls of the Saviour's humble birth-place. But within, the hovel is filled

with celestial glory. It is flooded with the light that radiates from Jesus.

So let it be in our religion. Look not for light to this tabernacle of an earthly Church in which the Saviour condescends to dwell. Dream not that Christ is of necessity in that Ark through which He speaks. As it shall be in Heaven, so let it be in the temple of your faith. "The glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof."

THE CHURCH REPORTER.

R. LAIRD COLLIER lectured at Hinsdale this week upon the "Personality of Oliver Goldsmith."

THE EVANSTON PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION listened last Monday evening to an essay on "Systematic Theology" by Dr. Miner Raymond.

REV. ARTHUR MITCHELL says that the whole Persian mission including forty ministers and sixty teachers, costs less annually than the current expenses of some of our city churches.

The Occident of San Francisco is not careful enough in its reading of THE CHICAGO PULPIT. In a note concerning Prof. Swing's Church it makes him pastor of the First, instead of the Fourth Presbyterian Church.

PLYMOUTH CHURCH, Rev. Wm. Alvin Bartlett, pastor, realized about $3,000 from premiums offered for choice of seats over and above their assessed valuation, making the sum total for sittings in this popular church about $15,000.

THE FREE LIBRARY had three hundred visitors last Saturday. Many books are being contributed by citizens, and if the project of an exchange of the school lot on Polk street for the old Post office building meets the approval of the United States, we shall soon have a library to be proud of.

REV. MR. THOMAS of the First Methodist Episcopal Church has hit on a good idea and is carrying it out with his characteristic energy. He proposes to furnish Saturday night entertainments, mainly musical, but sandwiched with a supper for the street Arabs of our city. About 200 hundred were in attendance last Saturday night and the affair was a success.

AT THE Unitarian Conference last Wednesday quite a lively discussion took place upon an essay by John Weiss of Boston upon "Faith." R. L. Collier objected that the essay was unchristian and opposed to the Bible, etc. Mr. Wendte replied defending Mr. Weiss, although saying little for his essay. The discussion promised to be general and interesting, but was cut short by adjournment to the refreshment table.

THE CHICAGO SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION (colored) held their second meeting at the Olivet Baptist Church, last Sunday, the house being uncomfortably crowded. Mr. Moore, ex-superintendent of the Bethel Sunday-school, acted as chairman. Speeches were made by the pastor, superintendent of the Quinn Chapel Sunday-school, and others, after which the Union adjourned to meet at Quinn Chapel the second Sunday in April.

THE HOME OF THE FRIENDLESS through its matron present the following report of last year's affairs: Number in Home Jan. 1, 1872, 103; number received during the year, adults, 953; number received during the year, children, 524; total, 1,477. Total cared for during the year, 1,580; number sent out during the year, adults, 1,011; number sent out during the year. children, 451; number of deaths, 10; total, 1.472; number remaining Jan. 1, 1873, 108.

GEO. N. CARPENTER, Secretary of the Chicago Unitarian Conference, at their meeting last Wednesday presented the following report, showing that in fifteen churches embraced in the Conference, there were 871 families which regularly attended the services of the Church, forming a congregation of 3,650 people. Nine churches hold two services on Sunday, and three one service. The number of Sunday-school scholars is 1,450. The aggregate number of books in these schools 6,952. The oldest church in the Conference is the Church of the Messiah, in Chicago, which was organized in 1836. The youngest church is at Valparaiso, Ind.. and was organized in 1871. Five

churches are without pastors. Among the changes of the year, Rev. C. A. Staples, Rev. Mr. Powell, and Rev. Mr. Stone resigned. Rev. J. O. Hewitt came to the church from the Baptist denomination.

THE CHICAGO NURSERY AND HALF-ORPHAN ASYLUM by its annual report shows that the total receipts of the institution during the year were $8,432.70; disbursements, $7,524.94. The average number of inmates had been one hundred and thirty. Seventy of these had attended school. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: President, Mrs. W. C. Goudy; First Vice President, Mrs. H. Reynolds; Second Vice President, Mrs. S. Howe; Treasurer, Mrs. O. H. Horton; Secretary, Mrs. W. A. Ewing; Matron of the Asylum, Mrs. E. L. Hobson; Teacher of the School, Mrs. M. Porter.

THE WASHINGTONIAN HOME give the following results of their last year's work. The number of persons admitted during 1872 was one hundred and sixty-six, of whom twenty were regarded as "reformed," sixty-two classed as "hopeful," forty-nine "doubtful," and seventeen "very doubtful." These classifications were made from close observation for a lengthened period. The percentage of absolute reforms was regarded as high as in any similar institution in the country. Five deaths occurred during the past twelve months. Of those admitted, sixty-eight were married, eighty-four single, and fourteen "unknown." Their average age was thirty-five years, and their nativity, American, 100; foreign, 46; unknown, 20. The attendant physician and Mrs. G. B. Marsh of the Ladies' Committee reflected severely upon the management of the Home, especially criticising the policy of allowing liquor to be drank in the Home itself. The prices of board were also characterized as exorbitant. Mrs. Marsh hoped to see the time when the Home would be surrounded by lawns and pebbly walks instead of fronting boldly upon a business thoroughfare. The following Directors were elected for the ensuing year, and if the reverend and honorable gentlemen allow themselves to occupy the office, it is hoped they will also fill it conscientiously: C. N. Holden, W. H. Wells, Dr. N. S. Davis, Dr. T. D. Fitch, H. Z. Culver, W. Hodgson, Rev. E. J. Goodspeed, J. L. Drake, Rev. W. H. Ryder, Rev. A. E. Kittredge, Monroe Heath, B. A. Miller, W. Warren, Dr. D. A. Colton, Rev. M. M. Parkhurst.

REV. C. DAY NOBLE says of creeds that for a man to say, "'I believe that I ought to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my mind' is a powerful help and incentive in the soul to think right when it cannot feel right. To lay hold of one's creed thus, in some distracted and evil hour, is exactly like giving the pilot's wheel a mighty twist in the darkness and storm. It pulls the ship about and heads her toward the east; then come other forces to drive her on her right way. It does not follow that he who is tolerant of all creeds, because he believes that each has a fragment of the infinite and unitary truth, should have no creed himself. Neither is it necessary that he who has a creed should regard it as a block of adamant cut for eternity. It should rather be like the tree of life yielding twelve manner of fruits for every spiritual state of the spiritual year. Creeds are, or ought to be, the words of God, and these words are always freshly spoken. They have in them the inexhaustible depths of the Infinite Speaker, and yield a new shade of meaning for every new change in the mind which receives them. No man in Christendom may be excused from having a Christian creed, and by creed now I mean some definite belief respecting the Bible, Jesus Christ, the nature of the human soul and its destiny hereafter. For creeds are not to be hammered out with labor and care, research and argument. The creeds thus built up by mental masonry are only stupendous wonders to be gazed at, not lived by. Creeds worth anything are simple, divinely indefinite and expansive. Such a creed, for instance, is 'I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.' which is like saying 'I believe in the sun.' Who and what the sun is, it will probably take you more than a lifetime to discover. But there it is up in the open sky, pouring down inexhaustible stores of light and heat to make over and over again spring's green paradise. So there in the sky of the Gospel shines the Sun of Righteousness, and you may believe in Him, although the telescope of your religious science has not yet analyzed the elements of which He is composed."

THE CHURCH CRITIC.

THE CRITIC heard a scoffer remark recently, that the sincerely religious element in this country was composed entirely of a few ministers, and a great many women. How much truth is there in the statement?

ARE NOT some of our church societies too rich? Would not the narative of Israel and the golden calf furnish a moral grain, that might be hammered out into instruction?

THE EXTREME cold weather of the past few Sundays has tested the physical Christianity of church-goers to the uttermost. With the thermometer at fifteen below, one feels his Christian impulse toward church-going rapidly cool. The thin attendance in some of our churches suggests at first that modern Christianity is lacking in sincerity and earnestness. It was not so in the good old Puritan days. But, on second thought, The Church Critic is inclined to believe that the sins of the present generation are not all in the line of indifference. In those good old days it was also true that the sturdy sons and daughters of Plymouth land minded not to face the storm for other purposes than church attendance. Perhaps, had the good people of those times to memory dear been burdened with the physical ailments and weaknesses of the present generation, they would have been equally willing to worship at home during stormy weather. Then, too, the poverty of the aids to worship in those good old times would alone have drawn the Puritans to a common meeting-house to listen to the spoken word. The householder of to-day has in his own house, fresh every week, more sermons, religious instruction, and moral essays than the Puritan heard or read in months. He is not forced back upon himself for his religious ideas, but has them ready at hand in such multitudes that his only effort need be one of choice. For instance, if he is so fortunate as to subscribe for THE CHICAGO PULPIT he has a sermon better than he would ordinarily hear ready for his reading. He can enjoy it at his leisure, studying the hard places and re-reading the good passages. His half dozen religious weeklies will supply him more reading than the Sabbath will give time to attend to, and all these are reasons added to the inclemency of the weather why he should stay at home. The Puritan in place of these inducements to remain at home had the monotony of a strict Sabbath to drive him forth.

WHILE some individuals clothe their personalities in a studied polish of manner, aiming to impress upon the society around them, a sense of their faultlessness in the *apparent* life, there are others whose good nature manifesting itself from within, bespeaks a heart and mind of perfect candor, disdaining to seem other than they are. However rude or unpolished the manners of the latter class may be, they carry about them the compensating assurance of an unstudied sincerity, which puts them upon a sure footing, and above the possibility of being misjudged at once. Your man of perfect manners *may* be a wolf in sheep's clothing, and he may be a true man with a disposition to cultivate the suavities, but you will need experience to determine which, whereas the man who does not seem to make a special study of outward, politeness, who has that impulsive heart-strongness that never stands upon manner or ceremony, but comes out with the rough truth at sight, is trusted even if not admired. Will it not be an era of sense, when men and women shall seek the confidence and esteem, rather than the admiration, of their fellow mortals? The aim of a correct life is not to hide its faults, but to overcome them. A fault of society has been and is, too much striving after the art that hides realities under the veneering of a specious politeness. A question for the Christianizing church, and reformers in general is: How shall we substitute culture of heart and soul for

the present conventional manners of a large part of society, which in too many cases, mask the vilest hypocrisy? It is a significant fact that the most polite nation, (as politeness is popularly defined) is also the most volatile and corrupt, which seems to indicate that where the most vice exists under civilization, there the highest polish of external manners is necessary in order to hide the corruption, and attractively complete the gilded machine of deception. The vicinity of unblushing, self-proclaiming wickedness is not so morally dangerous as the neighborhood of simulated virtue. So long as the Chesterfieldian graces suffice to open the doors of society, so long will the moral vineyard entertain the spoiler betimes, to the cost of truth and righteousness. The world does not want the fine manners of a bad man. It needs the sincere, inward-springing culture of goodness and moral truth. Educate the heart, the head and the conscience out of the idea that virtue is an art; instill it as a deep and abiding principle, and a good enough code of manners and social etiquette will follow.

THE beginning of a new year is peculiarly a time for retrospect and resolution. While the ever-journeying planet links without a halt, the two ends of its finished cycle together, humanity stands, as it were, with one foot in the past, and the other in the future. In this age, a completed year is a great thing, and the significance of a year in the unfolding of human things is ever growing greater. The volume of influences is widening and deepening all the while. In the ratio of the seed sown to the harvest reaped, the multiplications of God go on. Every recurring annular cycle boasts over its predecessor. It has seer more faces. In the splendor of its suns more tears have glistened, more smiles have beamed. It has established more firesides, and built more tombs. And, yet, only the tick of a clock, when the time shall come, will hurl the boaster from his throne, and herald his conqueror. It is a solemn thought that a mere point of time between an inspiration and an expiration of breath, perhaps separates the old duration from the new, — that sleeping or waking, we draw in, at one moment, the last breath that the old year can give us, and next, expel it into the hopeful face of the new, thus smiting the jocund, young life just born, with the flavor of death before it sees the daylight. It is ever thus! End and beginning — Life and Death, are knit in with each other. It is fitting here to pause and look back over the career of this dead giant, the old year. God filled his hands with the usual blessing; sunshine and rain, seed-time and harvest, have not failed in their season. "Day hath uttered speech to-day, and night to night hath shown knowledge." The great aggregated soul of civilization, plying the iron muscles, and tendons of steel, has conquered new realms! Its emotions and its crises have tingled from land to land along the nerve-like telegraph. Its vision has penetrated deeper into mystery. It has listened to the voice of new oracles. It is meet, at this time, which is both end and beginning, that each individual soul should review its year with a strict retrospect, and ask itself whether it has advanced toward the light, and finds itself more illuminated, blessed with a wider vision, and a deeper charity than of old; whether it has learned more of the spirit of Him, the star of whose nativity shot forth the original beam of all this blessed, swift latter day radiance; whether among the actions and thoughts that throng the days of the past are any gems of immortality. It is meet too, for congregations of Christians to consider strictly what has been done among, and and by them, toward the spiritual elevation of themselves as a church, and the general good of mankind. If the report is good, let them take courage and work for still better results. If bad or indifferent, let them thank God, that there yet remains a future — a *new year*, splendid with the possibilities of redemption. The Church Critic hopes fervently for a happy and a useful New Year to the people of God everywhere. If there be aught to regret in the labors of the past year, let us spring out of regret into work and hope! Let us say resignedly, with the Poet

> "Clasp, angel of the backward look,
> And folded wings of ashen gray,
> And voice of echoes far away —
> The brazen covers of thy book—"

and cheerfully, in this cold dawning of the wonder-bearing New Year:

> "We hear again the voice that bids
> The dreamer leave his dream midway.
> For larger hopes and graver fears —
> Life greatens in these later years,
> The century's aloe flowers to-day!"

THE BOOK READER.

THE BOOK READER has a friend that is a Catholic, who deserves pity. Now this friend would take a magazine and of course asked The Book Reader's advice. *Harper's* was rejected because of the mutual antipathy all *Harper's* bear Catholics, and all Catholics bear *Harper's*. The *Atlantic* was suggested, and the January number taken home for perusal. Next day the *Atlantic* returns accompanied by the jealous Catholic who has found in its political article much food for well digested denunciation. The Book Reader suggests "*Old and New*." "No, that is Unitarian." "The *Galaxy*." So the *Galaxy* is taken under advisement but proves to have an article on "The Pope" from a decidedly uncatholic standpoint. *Scribner's* will not do either. *Lippincott's* is finally decided upon amid loud assertions of the inconvenience of being a Catholic, the constant annoyances, etc., etc.

OWING to the abstract *density* of this volume* The Book Reader has not in his hurried review of it reached a very definite idea of its texture. Defining beauty in his preface as perfect form, Mr. Day proceeds in a causal and metaphysical manner to elaborately reason out the nature, variety, laws, and uses of beauty. His attempt to thus classify and reduce to order this somewhat puzzling conception, or existence, whichever it is, is thus justified in his somewhat long and rather heavy prefatory essay. "The special preparation of this treatise on the general subject of beauty as perfect form has been prompted by the observation that English literature is marvellously poor in æsthetic treatises, while a very general and earnest demand exists for suitable text books in this department of study. The importance of the study indeed can hardly be over-rated, whether regarded in its relations to the culture of art generally, and the right interpretation of art-creation, of whatever kind, or to the mere personal ends of personal culture, since most vitally connected with all intellectual and moral culture is the familiar knowledge of the nature of the beautiful as related to the true and the good." He also claims elsewhere in his preface the necessity of a comprehension and application of æsthetic law to expression in discourse and general literary execution; the logic of which claim would be to throw out of scientic theory the generally accepted idea that the most perfect expressions that have appeared in literature are of the artless, spontaneous kind. What becomes of *inspiration*, if we thus put natural voices indiscriminately under the ban of the educator? A bird will sing perfectly. So will a Burns, without æsthetic education. To determine the true value of this sort of instruction, we have but to ask ourselves and Mr. Day how far Raphæl's Madonna was distinctively from the within and the without — in other words, how far an inspiration and how far an education? The quality of the response,— appreciation, appears also to The Book Reader, an inspiration objective, and not teachable. The definition of beauty as "perfect form" does not seem very satisfactory as all beautiful scenes and conceptions do not repose in form of matter, speech, thought, or anything else with which we associate the idea of form. Such a thing as a beautiful *color* is conceivable, which the idea of *form* fails to convey. On the whole, The Book Reader does not incline to the belief in a special field for such an education as this work advocates, only possibly in that part which touches the formative arts. Here the author seems above ground, and without doubt his suggestions are true and valuable. Much interesting history and description of architectures, sculptures, and paintings are given. In these, and the practical hints on executive art from time to time thrown out, lies the true value of the work in our opinion. The philosophical part of the author's task was doubtless very difficult, as the effect and thesis of beauty are more of an emotional, than a philosophical or logical character. The work is finely illustrated with engravings of notable works of art and architecture.

*THE SCIENCE OF ÆSTHETICS. H. N. Day. Chas. C. Chatfield & Co., New Haven, Publishers.

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